ADDITIONAL STATEMENT

by

The Commission on

Comity, Federation and Unity

National Council of the Congregational Churches

at

SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

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In addition to its printed report, the Commission on Comity, Federation and Unity has to report that a recent event of much importance has thrown light on the question whether or not the Episcopal Bishops have power to act in any instance according to the agreements of the Concordat. This involves the serious question under what obligations to act the Bishops are laid in accordance with the agreements of the Concordat adopted by the Episcopal Convention. The Canon explicitly and positively states upon what conditions an applicant for additional ordination under the Canon may receive orders. It thus creates a certain right on the one side and a corresponding obligation on the other side.

The particular case which brings this question to a point of decision is as follows: Professor Bainton of the Divinity School of Yale University, with the approval of Dean Brown, asked of the Bishop of Connecticut such ordination. This instance was itself of more than ordinary local significance owing to its relations to the interests of religious education in the universities. The Bishop was unwilling to grant the request. Without reference to any personal or other considerations of which the Bishop must be the judge, the final reason which the Bishop gave for his refusal to grant this application at once renders this case a precedent for all such applications, and consequently it becomes a test case of the value of the Concordat to the ministry of other churches. For the Bishop stated that the House of Deputies had refused to concur with the House of Bishops in authorizing such changes in the form of ordering Priests as might seem advisable in the special ordinations authorized by the Concordat. Consequently the Bishop decided that he had no power to proceed for, he said, a "bishop must act under the law," hence, so far as this decision is accepted by the Episcopal Church, the offer to us of the Concordat does not hold good.

The Corresponding Secretary of the Commission, Dr. Smyth, then wrote to the Secretaries of the General Convention requesting them to send transcripts of any acts relating to this subject. Their answers made clear that the action of the House of Bishops favoring the Concordat was received by the Deputies on the afternoon of the day before the adjournment of the convention; and, on the next morning, was returned without concurrence to the Bishops just before their adjournment, after their routine business had been finished, and too late for any conference with the other House. Therefore no further action was taken. Consequently, as at present advised, subsequent action is the responsibility of the Episcopal Church.

In recording this apparent failure of the negotiations to find some solution of the problem of ministerial ordination, your Com-

mission desires gratefully to record the progress that has been made towards mutual understanding. The significant fact should not be lost sight of, that the General Convention, both Houses concurring, amended the Constitution of the Episcopal Church so as to make constitutional provision for giving Episcopal ordination to men remaining ministers of other churches, thus recognizing the validity of the ministry of other churches. This is a long step in one direction towards the ultimate reunion of the English-speaking Church.

In this connection, attention is called to

The Lambeth Appeal

The appeal of the recent Lambeth Conference to all Christian people has been laid over by previous National Councils to be taken up at this time. It has not, however, as yet been generally presented in any readily accessible form to our churches, hence few are prepared to give it the thorough consideration which its epochal importance requires. Born as it was of the travail of the war, it has now been sent forth by the Bishops of the whole Anglican Church for all other communions throughout the world to answer. It calls for "an adventure of goodwill, and still more of faith, for nothing less", they declare, "is required than a new discovery of the creative resources of God. To this adventure," they say, "we are convinced that God is now calling all the members of His Church." When have Congregationalists since the days when our forefathers went forth from the Church of England, failed to respond to any call for a new adventure of faith? We owe it to the spirit of our whole history to give heed to this bugle call from across these four centuries of separation.

In the year 1910 our National Council at Boston was among the first to respond to an overture for conferences from the previous Lambeth Conference. Since that time our Commission on Comity, Federation and Unity has made frequent reports concerning the progress of such approaches toward unity. The Commission have now received an official copy of the Lambeth Appeal from the Archbishop of Canterbury, together with reports of conferences now going on between Commissions of the Anglican Church and the Free Churches, besides other utterances and documents of importance. We have also received from Lambeth expressions of much interest in any action which this Council may take in respect to it.

In the space allotted to us we cannot present any adequate account of these proposals, or of the conferences now going on between Commissions of the Anglican Bishops and the Free Churches in England. We may only notice that the Appeal passes by and leaves behind us any question as to the validity of our ministry or the efficiency of our sacraments. The Bishops ask first of themselves and then of

all others "a readiness to make sacrifices for the sake of a common fellowship, a common ministry, and a common service in the world." In making this appeal they do not come to us empty handed, nor with an offering of words only. For although, as a Conference only of Bishops, not empowered to legislate, they leap over any constitutional or canonical limitations by the adoption of the following resolution declaring that a "Bishop is justified in giving occasional authorization to ministers not episcopally ordained, who in his judgment, are working towards the ideal of union such as is described in our Appeal, to preach in churches within his Diocese and to clergy of the Diocese to preach in the churches of such ministers." They go still further, and, in reference to the intercommunion of believers, they declare that "the Bishops of the Anglican Communion will not question the action of any Bishop who, in the few years between the initiation and completion of a definite scheme of union, shall countenance the irregularity of admitting to communion the baptized but unconfirmed communicants of non-Episcopal congregations concerned in the scheme."

In view of this situation, thus briefly indicated, your Commission would recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

First, that this National Council express its thankful appreciation of the spirit and aim of this Appeal of the Lambeth Conference.

Second, that in further preparation for final determination of our action upon it, we would recommend that it be laid before our State and local Associations and Conferences for further information, and made generally known among the people of our Churches.

Third, that the Commission on Comity, Federation and Unity be asked to make public through the press or otherwise, any interim statements or utterances from other Christian bodies which they may deem desirable for the further information of the ministry and congregations of our own denomination.